

The Parable of the Sower.

BY W. L. STAHL.

As I have read the "Parable of the sower" a short time ago it has remained upon my mind very emphatically since. "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." This represents thoughtless, careless, and stupid hearers. How many precious souls, just in the vigor of youth, go to the Sabbath School, and church, very often in this manner, because they do not properly prepare. It appears that the more that one goes to church or hear the word proclaimed, the more stupid they grow, and it does not matter how forcibly and clearly the truth is presented, they will still not appreciate.

How difficult it is for the sower to sow, so that he will receive a good harvest. Even he will find some of his seeds among those stony places. "The same is he that heareth the word and anon with joy receiveth it" immediately; and as we are elsewhere taught, without either understanding or counting the cost of Christ's service, for the true Christian principle is lacking.

The fickle person is too often found with quick feelings, easily excited, and who for a time appear to be much engaged. But they are changable, and easily turned aside by difficulties, and so give up and become more hardened than before, and therefore become unfruitful: destitute of good works.

There are scores of men who would rather give their whole time to worldly pleasures and gathering riches, than to give a part of it to their soul's salvation. Is there any advantage if a man would gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? We should always comfort our souls before providing for wealth. Would it not be well for us to make this a rule and carry it out strictly?

How often we find people who go to church where the good seed is sown and who go for the express purpose of some other business. He does not live a life of piety ("Piety is the only proper and adequate relief of decaying man") toward God, and of beneficent toward men.

This represents the worldly-minded man, who is so occupied with the things of time, that he has no heart to attend to the salvation of his soul, or the souls of his fellow men.

I believe that if a man does not try to understand the word of God in its purity and obey it, that such shall not have a full understanding of it. The kingdom of heaven, here, the visible church of Christ is likened to a field in which the owner sows good seed, etc. This includes all those who have united with the church of Christ, to sow faithfully and to partake freely of the truth of the gospel and to let our light so shine that all can partake of it and be benefited who come in contact, and when we get into dark places, when the clouds of sin overshadow us very thickly, let this light be kindled by the influences of heaven. "God hath the influence into the very essence of all things," so that our light will shine forth very brightly, as the moon does with its borrowed light from the sun. So that the rays of our light may shine forth to the very bottom pit of the wicked.

We as members of the church of Christ; and if we intend to do our duties we must embrace the truth of the gospel, and sow it wherever it will yield.

What a great field is the Sunday school to sow in, and what an amount of labor is awaiting us, and expected from us as Christians. The prayer-meeting is another, the Missionary field and a number of other fields are before us to labor in, and if we do not labor faithfully the greater the tares will be.

Small beginnings may end in a great work as the mustard seed, though very small, when grown, is the greatest among herbs, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

So small beginnings with a Christian zeal may end in a large light so that many a weary traveler can find shelter there and find the way to Christ.

I will suggest to all young persons, especially to brethren who intend to educate their children, to send them to Ashland College, for there is a fountain where the pure water bubbles forth freely;

there the Christian influences are thrown around them, as a strong arm of protection, and it is indeed an arm of protection and comfort, for those who accept it, for I have never spent as happy hours anywhere as I did at Ashland College especially those in the chapel, on the Sabbath days attending Sabbath school, church and prayer-meeting. I have found that arm of protection to protect me ever since, and hope to be benefited all the days of my life. Ashland College is like a magnetic point ever since to me, for there is attraction and a desire to return again for the thirst is growing greater to drink from that educational fountain again.

Pine Hill, Pa.

"Intemperance as Viewed from a Christian Standpoint."

God created man such a being that it is necessary for him to eat and drink in order to sustain life and strength. So long as he eats with this object in view, he eats "to the glory of God." So long as he drinks with this object in view, he drinks "to the glory of God."

But men and women eat for another purpose than that of sustaining life and strength. Men and women eat and drink for pleasure.

This is intemperance. Not that we should derive no pleasure from eating and drinking, for truly temperate men experience a far keener sense of pleasure than does the benumbed glutton. But by feeding the appetite merely for pleasure's sake, we enroll ourselves in the great army of gluttons and wine bibbers: and these are sinners.

In eating or drinking to excess—merely for pleasure—we drive out by degrees and finally destroy the very life that should have been strengthened by the food taken. But men do more than destroy themselves by excessive use of *proper food*. They prepare fiery liquors that contain no life giving principles, that have no redeeming feature, but contain the very essence of destruction. And men and women drink them for pleasure.

Before us is a field of standing grain. The good that is in us prompts us to convert it into bread with which to sustain life. The evil that is in us prompts us to convert it into liquor with which to destroy life. God is the father of good; Satan is the father of evil. Whom will ye obey? The mill represents heaven, in that from it we draw the essence of life. The distilleries represent hell, in that we draw from them the essence of death. To which are you going to day, brother?

As true Christians, it is our desire to place ourselves under such influences as tend to life rather than death. As active Christians we "resist evil" in every way we can. It is our opportunity, our privilege, our duty to assist in removing from among us the evil of *strong drink*. "He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

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Consider the Lilies.

My morning lesson, in the course of regular reading, was in the twelfth chapter of Luke; and my mind became impressed with those verses, from the sixteenth to the thirty-fourth, exhibiting the folly of laying up treasures for self, and so missing the true riches. I was interested to see how graciously God sets us free from earthly care. The ravens have neither storehouse nor barn, yet God feedeth them; the lilies neither toil nor spin, yet God clothes them; and how beautifully clothed they are! although He knows it is for a day or two, and then they are useless. It was as if my Father said, "My child, I am rich in store and ability, let me think what you need to eat and drink! Let me think about your dress. Do not be careful or troubled about these things, like those who do not know me as their Father, for 'your Father knoweth what things ye have need of.'" If we claim him as our Father, through Jesus Christ, let us treat him with childlike confidence. And so I began to praise him that for years he had taken care of me, just as the word said, and I could leave with Him those things that relate more specially to the here-after. Thus was I strengthened and refreshed for more work, thinking that my Father knoweth all my need.

In the afternoon I went to meet with a little

band of praying ones. When our prayer meeting was over, one of them said, "Will you go and have tea with me?" We went together. She had been converted only a short time, and began to tell how much she wanted to be better able to read her Bible, as she could not seem to get into the deep things contained therein.

I said "Oh never mind them; get a good hold of surface things. When I am reading I take the very simplest look that is in the words. I find quite enough in that way for myself, and leave the deep things to the very wise and learned folks."

She laughed and said, "You do go into the deep things."

I said, "You will find comfort in the simplest reading. Now this morning I got a great blessing in the twelfth chapter of Luke, and your little girl could understand the passage. I think it just means, Don't worry about money, or bread and butter, because your Father in heaven knows you need all these things: and so he bids you let him see after them for you and you believe in him and rest." And then I went on to tell her some of my own experience, in illustration.

She listened earnestly, and then said, "Why did you talk of money matters to me? Do you know anything of my affairs?"

I said, "How could I? I took that lesson to show you how to read your Bible, as it was my own lesson this morning."

"Well then," said she, "God must have meant, it. I have been very much depressed all day. We are just passing through great pecuniary difficulties, which may end in our being penniless, unless something interferes."

"Well then," I said, "take courage, your Father knoweth."

The next day she came to me to tell me what wonderful words they were! how they had lifted away the care, and she could trust her Father with the whole thing.

I said, "Well, then, read the rest of your Bible pretty much like that, leaving the deep things to the wise and learned—but be you sure to get your children's bread from day to day.—MARY GILCHRIST.

There are two peculiar things about the proclamation Cyrus made in reference to building the temple at Jerusalem. One is that he did not put the whole burden on the people who were leaving their Eastern home and going out West to live. Those who went West to Palestine, were doubtless, in large part, those who would suffer least loss by going. The wealthiest people, who had bought land, and had gotten into business and could not sacrifice it, remained in the East, in Babylonia. Now Cyrus told those who were to be at the great expense of building this house of worship to pay what they could themselves, and take the labor and responsibility of it, and take up liberal collections among their friends in the East. "Whosoever is left," says the proclamation, "let the people of his place," in the East, "help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the free-will offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem." It seems that people who have gone off on the Western frontier to live are not to be expected to pay all the expense of their churches at first. They have the right to ask help from the East; and that is what our church-building societies are for. Another interesting thing about the proclamation of Cyrus is that, with all financial suggestions, he does not suggest that they borrow money of the Royal bank, or of any capitalists or speculators, to finish the building, if they found it hard to raise money enough by free gifts. It did not occur to him that the house should be finished with a mortgage.—INDEPENDENT.

If on our daily course our mind

Be set to hallow all we find,

New treasures still of countless price

God will provide for sacrifice:

Old friends, old scenes will holier be,

As more of heaven in each we see.

Some softening gleam of love or prayer

Shall dawn on every cross and care.

—JOHN KEBLER.